

lose their health care when they gain a job. This bill passed the Senate 99–0. A bipartisan majority in the House has already cosponsored it. So I say to Congress: Don't water the bill down; guarantee its financing; and go ahead and send it to me so we can sign it without delay.

It will make money for America. It will make more taxpayers. And we'll be spending the Medicaid money regardless. Americans with disabilities who want to work shouldn't have to wait one more day.

After years of delay, last week the House of Representatives finally heard the voice of the American people and passed a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights. By choosing progress over partisanship again, we can also pass the work incentives improvement act and keep America working and growing.

I urge the leadership to seize this opportunity. Make this a season of progress, not a winter of partisan politics. Let's finish the job the American people sent us here to do.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:39 p.m. on October 15 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 16. In his address, the President referred to Executive Order 13124 of June 4, 1999, entitled "Amending the Civil Service Rules Relating to Federal Employees With Psychiatric Disabilities" (3 CFR, 1999 Comp., p. 192). The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 15 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Memorandum on Hiring People With Disabilities in the Federal Government

October 16, 1999

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Hiring People with Disabilities in the Federal Government

Since I became President, we have created over 19 million new jobs and unemployment is as low as it has been in 29 years. Still, almost 75 percent of working-age Americans with severe disabilities remain unemployed. If this Nation is to live up to its promise of equal opportunity, and our economy is to continue to strengthen and expand, we must draw on the untapped energy and creativity of these millions of capable Americans.

One of the most glaring barriers to work for people with disabilities is that they frequently become ineligible for Medicaid or Medicare if they go back to work, putting them in the untenable position of choosing between health care coverage and employment. That is why my budget fully funds the Work Incentives Improvement Act, investing \$1.2 billion over 5 years in health care and employment services so that people with disabilities can work. This legislation was unanimously endorsed by the House Commerce Committee on May 19 and has been cosponsored by a majority of the

House of Representatives; it passed the Senate 99–0 on June 16. It is time for the Congress to finish the job and pass the Work Incentives Improvement Act immediately. People with disabilities who want to work should not have to wait one more day.

Vice President Gore and I have already taken a number of steps to increase the employment of people with disabilities. On March 13, 1998, I signed Executive Order 13078 establishing the National Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities to create a coordinated national policy to bring working-age individuals with disabilities into gainful employment. In December, the Task Force presented the Vice President with its first report, and I am proud to say we have taken action on all the Task Force's formal recommendations.

As we fight to ensure that all people with disabilities have the health care and other assistance they need to go to work, we must also lead by example and make the Federal Government a model employer of people with disabilities. On June 4, 1999, I signed an Executive order eliminating the Federal Government's stricter hiring standards for people with psychiatric disabilities, an issue highlighted by Mrs.

Gore earlier in the year. And last December, the Vice President asked the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to develop a plan to increase the representation of adults with disabilities in the Federal workforce.

Today I am pleased to release that plan, *Accessing Opportunity: The Plan for Employment of People with Disabilities in the Federal Government*, and the companion employment guide prepared by OPM. These documents give agencies detailed and practical information on ways to recruit people with disabilities for positions at all levels of government; provide opportunities

for students with disabilities; ensure career opportunities for people with disabilities; collect and maintain data to monitor their success; and provide reasonable accommodations for applicants and employees with disabilities.

I therefore direct you to implement this plan immediately within your departments and agencies and to bring qualified people with disabilities into the Federal workforce. This plan is proof of the Federal Government's commitment to empowering people with disabilities; now is the time for us to fulfill that commitment.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Remarks at a National Italian American Foundation Dinner October 16, 1999

Thank you ladies and gentlemen. First of all, let me thank you for your warm welcome to Hillary and me. Thank you, Frank Guarini, for being my friend for all these years. Thank you, President Joe Cerrell. To all the distinguished guests here and the honorees, the Members of Congress, Gerry Ferraro, Ambassador Foglietta, Ambassador Rosapepe. To our distinguished Italian guests, Maria Bartiromo, Ambassador Salleo, and especially Foreign Minister Dini.

I would like to say a special word of appreciation at this point to the Prime Minister and the Government of Italy for standing with us and working with us for the cause of our common humanity in Kosovo and, before that, in Bosnia. We could not have done it without Italy, and I am grateful.

Justice Scalia and Cardinal Hickey and all the others here—you stole my line about 50 percent of my four Chiefs of Staff being Italian. The other two wish they were. *[Laughter]* I thank you for all the gifts from Campania, including the beautiful flowers for Hillary. We visited there when the 1994 conference of the G-7 nations was held in Naples. And we have been very blessed by our times there. I understand my friend Dick Grasso and the Barnes & Noble CEO, Leonard Riggio, are both from that region of Italy. I'm about to go back to Florence, and I'm only supposed to stay a day, so if I play hooky and stay an extra day I want 3,000 of you to write an excuse for me, just like I used to get when I missed a day of school.

I guess I ought to say, since this is baseball season, that I'm sure of one person who would like to be here tonight who can't be is Joe Torre. Now, I'm not taking sides in the baseball series, but the Yankees do have two Italian-Americans on their team, Joe and the catcher, Joe Girardi. And no city in America has been better to me than Boston, but the Red Sox haven't had an Italian since their pitcher Frank Viola retired. So I think we ought to get the Red Sox an Italian baseball player to balance out our equal opportunity agenda through the country.

You know, from the beginning of our country, Italian-Americans have made invaluable contributions. And I want to say a special word of thanks, not for all those which I could litanize, and you know them, but for the National Italian American Foundation's leadership for our efforts to build one America.

I'm very grateful that this is a country in better shape than it was 7 years ago when I first came here. I am very grateful for the chance that I have had to serve. I'm grateful for the Italian-Americans who have helped to ensure the success of our administration. I'm glad that we have the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years and the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years and the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest crime rates in 26 years and the first back-to-back surpluses in 42 years.

But I have to tell you that the most important thing we have to do to get ready for the 21st